

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 14, 2005

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WASHINGTON - U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) Commissioner Elizabeth H. Prodromou [testified](#) on Wednesday, November 16 before the Congressional Human Rights Caucus (CHRC) at a briefing titled "Religious Freedom and Democracy in Egypt: The Role of Coptic Christians and Muslims." The hearing was held in the Rayburn House Office Building, Room 2200, from 4:00-5:30 p.m.

The Commission has visited Egypt and met with senior Egyptian government officials, as well as prominent religious leaders, human rights activists, women's rights groups, and other civil society leaders. The Commission placed Egypt on its Watch List again this year.

The Commission has found that discrimination, intolerance, and other human rights violations affect a broad spectrum of Egyptian society, including: Muslims, Christians, Jews, Baha'is and members of other religious communities. The Egyptian government has adopted measures in recent years to acknowledge certain aspects of the religious pluralism in Egyptian society. The Commission believes that more can and should be done by the government to protect the right

to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, to punish those responsible for religiously-motivated violence, and to combat widespread and virulent anti-Semitism and other intolerance in the media and in the education system.

In light of recent events in Egypt, three serious issues that the Commission concludes merit immediate attention are:

- Societal violence against and lack of protection for Coptic Christians.
- Anti-Semitism in the media and education system.
- Requirements on national ID cards that discriminate against Baha'is and others.

What: CHRC briefing, "Religious Freedom and Democracy in Egypt: The Role of Coptic Christians and Muslims"

When: Wednesday, November 16, 2005, 4:00-5:30 p.m.

Where: Rayburn House Office Building, Room 2200

Commissioner Prodromou's testimony will be available at www.uscifr.gov on November 16 at 4:00 p.m.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom was created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 to monitor the status of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief abroad, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related international instruments, and to give independent policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and the Congress.

Michael Cromartie

- Felice D. Gaer

